

Whereas Croatia supports regional cooperation as a means of bringing stability to Europe, particularly Southeast Europe, and has cooperated with the countries that neighbor Croatia to promote such stability, including providing technical and other assistance to countries that seek membership in the European Union;

Whereas, on October 3, 2005, the European Union decided to open accession negotiations with Croatia based on the assessment of the European Union's Council of Ministers that Croatia met the political and economic criteria for candidacy in the European Union, including that Croatia was fully cooperating with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia;

Whereas the cooperation between the Government of Croatia and the Tribunal improved significantly under Prime Minister Ivo Sanader;

Whereas, since November 2003, Croatia has handed over to the Tribunal eleven individuals indicted for war crimes;

Whereas the cooperation of the Government of Croatia with the Tribunal assisted in the arrest of Ante Gotovina on December 8, 2005, in Spain and his transfer to the Tribunal on December 10, 2005;

Whereas the success of the Government of Croatia in bringing war criminals to justice demonstrates the commitment of the Government to move Croatia toward a brighter future of peace, stability, and prosperity for its people; and

Whereas Croatia shares the common interests and values of the free and democratic world: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved, That—*

(1) since the Republic of Croatia became an independent country, the Government and people of Croatia have made significant progress in strengthening democratic institutions, respect for human rights, and the rule of law in Croatia;

(2) Croatia's membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization ("NATO") would contribute to stability in Southeast Europe;

(3) it is the sense of the Senate that—

(A) the Government and people of Croatia should be commended for their progress on protecting minority rights in Croatia, progress toward achieving the political, economic, military, and other requirements of NATO's Membership Action Plan, contribution to the International Security Assistance Force and the war against terrorism, and for their constructive participation the Proliferation Security Initiative and in the United States-Adriatic Charter;

(B) the Government of Croatia should be commended for its cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia which led to the apprehension and transfer of several individuals indicted for war crimes, including Ante Gotovina, to the Tribunal;

(C) the Government of Croatia should continue its cooperation with the Tribunal;

(D) the Government of Croatia should continue and strengthen its role as a partner on nonproliferation and its support in the war against terrorism and in Iraq;

(E) the Government of Croatia should continue its efforts to implement defense reforms; and

(F) the Government of the United States should continue and increase its defense and security cooperation with the Government of Croatia, including through education, training, and technical cooperation, to assist Croatia in the reform process and in fulfilling its requirements for membership in NATO; and

(4) upon complete satisfaction of the criteria for NATO membership, in accordance with NATO's guidelines, Croatia should be

invited to be a full member of NATO at the earliest possible date.

#### THANK OUR DEFENDERS WEEK

Mr. FRIST. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 343, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 343) expressing the sense of the Senate that the week of December 19, 2005 shall be designated "Thank Our Defenders Week."

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. FRIST. I ask unanimous consent the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 343) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

#### S. RES. 343

Whereas, ever since our Nation was founded, the members of our military, soldiers, sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guard personnel, active duty, Guard, and reserve, have played a critical role protecting America's vital interests and spreading peace throughout the world;

Whereas more than 193,000 troops in the Persian Gulf region are courageously fighting insurgents and helping to establish democracies in Iraq and Afghanistan;

Whereas 19,000 servicemen and service-women are stationed in Afghanistan, fighting Al-Qaeda and providing security for the people of that fledgling nation;

Whereas over 30,000 troops are protecting American interests and maintaining peace on the Korean peninsula;

Whereas, in total, nearly 300,000 brave men and women are actively serving on the soil of 120 foreign countries and on the High Seas, fighting terrorists and making sacrifices for American citizens and families; and

Whereas, thanks to their tireless efforts, a brutal dictatorship in Iraq and an oppressive regime in Afghanistan have given way to emerging democratic societies: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved, That with gratitude it is the sense of the Senate that the week of December 19, 2005 should be designated "Thank Our Defenders week."*

#### GEORGIA'S SOUTH OSSETIAN PEACE PLAN

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 344 which was submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 344) expressing support for the Government of Georgia's South Ossetian Peace Plan and the successful and peaceful reintegration of the Region of Georgia.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 344) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

#### S. RES. 344

Whereas during December 1991, Georgia was internationally recognized as an independent and sovereign country following the formal dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics;

Whereas the United States supports the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and ongoing democratic reform process in Georgia;

Whereas the United States reaffirms its support for the peaceful resolution of the conflict in Adjara and the restoration of democracy and political stability in that region of Georgia;

Whereas as a result of a conflict from 1991 to 1992, a separatist regime has enforced its rule in the Georgia territory of South Ossetia, impoverishing the people living in South Ossetia, militarizing the area, allowing organized crime to flourish, and posing a threat to the peace and security in the region;

Whereas the Government of Georgia has announced a peace plan to reach a full political settlement to the South Ossetian conflict;

Whereas the Government of Georgia has acknowledged that mistakes were made in its past efforts in dealing with the region of South Ossetia;

Whereas at the 59th meeting of the United Nations General Assembly, Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili outlined specific components of a peace initiative that includes demilitarization, confidence building measures, and economic, social, cultural, and political steps to protect the South Ossetian people and their rights while reintegrating the region, with significant autonomy, into Georgia;

Whereas President Saakashvili reaffirmed the main principles of the peace agreement at the Parliamentary Assembly Council of Europe in January, 2005, held in Strasbourg, France;

Whereas a formal comprehensive peace proposal based on the Strasbourg principles was formally proposed on October 27, 2005, at the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe; and

Whereas on December 6, 2005, at their 13th Ministerial Council Meeting in Ljubljana, Slovenia, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe endorsed the Government of Georgia's peace plan, stating, "We welcome the steps taken by the Georgian side to address the peaceful resolution of the conflict and believe that the recent proposals, in particular the Peace Plan built upon the initiatives of the President of Georgia presented at the 59th United Nations General Assembly and supported by the sides, will serve as a basis for the peaceful settlement of the conflict": Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved, That the Senate—*

(1) commends the Government of Georgia for its vision and determination in its efforts to resolve peacefully the conflict in South Ossetia;

(2) supports the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of the democratic Government of Georgia;